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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KPAO](#) [AU](#) [OPRC](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: January 23, 2007

Proell Presents OeVP Program

1. Minister for the Environment Josef Proell yesterday presented "Perspectives Group 2010", which outlines proposals for the OeVP's future course that are to be developed in detail by 14 working groups. The OeVP will be "open to outside criticism," Proell emphasized. Presenting the OeVP's program for the future yesterday, Minister for the Environment Josef Proell emphasized the party's willingness to "listen" and to become "more open, more colorful and comprehensive." Within the so-called "Perspectives Group 2010" plan, 14 working groups are to develop reform proposals and new strategies for the party in areas including labor, education, European policy, family and women's policies, health care, the economy and globalization, social affairs, security and integration, the environment, culture and the media, centrist daily Die Presse and other major Austrian media report.

Conflict between Strache and Stadler

2. A two-day meeting of the FPÖ is expected to be dominated by the power struggle between party leader Heinz-Christian Strache and FPÖ heavyweight Ewald Stadler. The dispute erupted after "war game" photos of Strache emerged -- allegedly released by Stadler. Although Strache has threatened to have him kicked out of the party, Stadler is confident it won't come to that. All Austrian media report on the ongoing power struggle in the Freedom Party. According to ORF online news, Strache's threat to expel Ewald Stadler from the party and the consequent loss of one representative in the FPÖ parliamentary faction, would cost the FPÖ up to 400,000 Euros per year in party finances. Meanwhile, mass-circulation daily Kurier writes that new Interior Minister Guenther Platter (OeVP) criticized Strache for his participation in paintball games, and quotes him as saying he "had had no time for such activities" in his youth.

EU Foreign Ministers Favor Tough Stance on Iran

3. In the dispute over Iran's nuclear ambitions, the European Union foreign ministers at their meeting in Brussels on Monday agreed to a tough interpretation of the UN Security Council resolution. In a front-page report, liberal daily Der Standard writes that EU foreign ministers on Monday agreed to implement sanctions going beyond the stipulations of the UNSC resolution of December 2006 in order to "send a clear signal to Iran." According to the daily, the EU's measures include classifying as ineligible for admission to the

EU twelve leading Iranian military officers and businesspeople, and freezing their assets. Among the twelve Iranians banned from entering the EU is Mohammed Kannadi, Vice-President for Research and Development of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization, the Standard notes. Tehran has meanwhile announced that, in protest against the sanctions, it will for the first time refuse to admit 38 IAEA inspectors. This was a "first step" in its strategy to restrict Iranian cooperation with the Vienna-based UN nuclear watchdog, Tehran said.

Military Expert's Visit

¶4. Lt. Col. Patricia Parris, accredited last year as US Embassy Vienna's new Air Attach, paid her inaugural visit to the Austrian Air Force base at Langenlebarn in Lower Austria recently. ... headlines mass-circulation daily Kurier on January 22, and reports on the visit to the Lower Austrian Air Force Base at Langenlebarn of US Embassy Vienna's Air Attach Lt. Col. Patricia Parris. The paper calls Parris a specialist for "sensitive regions," given her previous postings in South Korea and Romania, among others. Parris was "leased to" the Defense Ministry in Bucharest in order to support the Romanian EU accession, the daily notes. Parris paid her inaugural visit to the Langenlebarn barracks, where she met with Austrian Brigadier Guenter Schiefert, who is overseeing training in the Austrian Air Force. Parris was particularly interested in the training for the Eurofighter jets, writes the Kurier.

Al Qaeda Deputy Mocks US

¶5. Al Qaeda's deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has ridiculed President Bush's newly-unveiled Iraq strategy, according to US-based terrorism think tank Site, which has posted a videotape showing Zawahiri mocking President Bush's plan to stop violence in Iraq by bringing in 20,000 extra troops. Like several Austrian media reporting on the new video message from Al Qaeda Deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, liberal daily Der Standard quotes Al-Zawahiri as suggesting US President Bush should deploy the entire US military to Iraq, instead of just an additional 20,000 troops. The tape emerged shortly before the US President is scheduled to seek Congress' support for his Iraq strategy in his annual State of the Union Address, Austrian media note. In centrist daily Die Presse, Washington correspondent Norbert Rief suggests the President will discuss the state of a "nation which is less and less prepared to follow him." He cannot expect much sympathy, not only because the Democrats now dominate Congress, but also because Americans are increasingly unhappy with their President, with Bush's approval ratings down to 33 percent, Rief continues. The Presse correspondent believes, however, that the Iraq war will not play the key role in today's State of the Nation address: According to White House sources, the President will discuss the war on terror in general terms only, and is expected to focus on domestic policy issues instead.

Situation Tense in Lebanon

¶6. In Lebanon, hundreds of demonstrators have blocked major roads around Beirut as part of a general strike called by the Hezbollah-led opposition. Hezbollah is trying to force the resignation of the Siniora administration and says it wants formation of a national unity government. Major roads into Beirut have been blocked and protestors have lined up to try to stop people going to work. The government has warned that troops may be used to maintain order. According to mass-circulation tabloid Oesterreich online, the strike in Lebanon appears to be escalating, with thousands of demonstrators blocking roads in and around Beirut and calling for Premier Siniora's resignation. While Siniora on Monday had urged the Lebanese people to ignore the calls for a strike and to go to work on Tuesday, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has announced the extension of the protest. Nasrallah Monday accused the government of wanting to launch civil war in the country. The Siniora administration, in contrast, believes the opposition's protests are an attempt by Syria to re-establish its influence in Lebanon. Several international airlines have cancelled their flights to

Beirut in the meantime.
McCaw